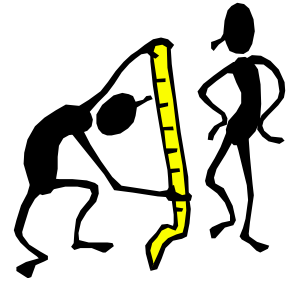


# Performance Evaluations



**An organization's greatest asset is its people.** The success of an organization depends upon the contributions of its employees. Employees must know what is expected of them and how they are measuring up to those expectations in order to make effective contributions. They need to know what they can do to improve performance in their present jobs and to prepare themselves for more responsibility.



**Are employee performance evaluations worthwhile?** Done correctly they can empower your people to effectively contribute to the success of your organization, and they can help you stay out of legal trouble. However, done incorrectly, they can spell disaster. Positive results include the following:

- \* **Improved Employee Performance**
- \* **Improved Communications**
- \* **Protection from Wrongful Discharge Suits**

The basis for effective performance evaluations is good communication. This begins with a good job description for each employee. From most job descriptions you can extract 6-8 major responsibilities and further break these down into important objectives for success. If possible, limit the objectives to concrete, measurable areas of performance. If you must consider subjective standards, consider how they relate to the job. Is the weight you're giving these factors proportionate to their impact on performance? Is there a more objective way to measure performance? If you're going to make subjective judgments on an employee, take the time to list a few concrete examples of how you expect him or her to be "more assertive" or to show "better leadership qualities." If you can't provide examples, perhaps you shouldn't be making these judgments. Keep in mind that these are the kinds of questions courts ask in discrimination suits involving subjective evaluations.

Focus on the following:

- ⇒ **how the employee is doing the job**
- ⇒ **how the employee can better do the job**
- ⇒ **how the employee can work toward realizing long-term goals**

It's a good idea to have both the supervisor and the employee rate the importance of each category on the evaluation. Together they can discuss their ratings to establish what skills and abilities are most important. When possible allow employees to contribute to setting the performance standards they will be asked to meet. Their participation encourages cooperation, understanding and motivation. Consider and include such areas as:

✿ **QUALITY OF WORK**—neatness, accuracy, organization and thoroughness.

✿ **QUANTITY OF WORK**—numbers and quantity standards set for the job and the ability to meet deadlines.

✿ **WORK HABITS**—time management, dependability, attendance, punctuality, safe working habits and initiative.

Ratings can be as simple as outstanding, satisfactory and needs improvement, OR exceeds expectations, meets expectations and unacceptable.

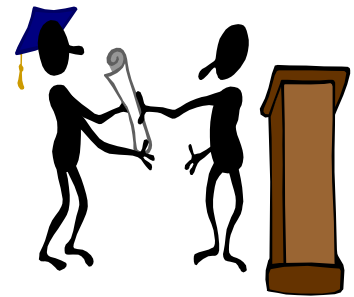
Involvement of all staff in performance evaluations is another alternative. These types of evaluations gather feedback from all levels (superiors, peers and subordinates) and can provide information to identify training needs, teamwork, strengths and weaknesses and other areas of concern that may have gone unnoticed. It can also instill a sense of responsibility in employees to cooperate with each other no matter what their status is in the organization.

Some guidelines to adhere to with employees rating superiors are the following:

- must be anonymous
- should be done at a time other than around the employee's evaluation date
- criteria must reflect the factors employees have knowledge of and are capable of rating
- employees should be asked only to rate individuals with whom they have frequent and significant contact

It's important to communicate with employees the results of the process; otherwise they may view their involvement as a waste of time.

Often, promotions and salary increases are tied to the results of evaluations. Many experts advise that a separate meeting be held for this purpose so the evaluation can concentrate on the employee's development without getting involved in this emotional aspect at the same time. Salary increases or bonuses should not be given regardless of an employee's performance but rather should be given as recognition of how well employees have done their jobs.



Training should be given to all personnel involved in giving evaluations. Many times, supervisors have come up through the ranks and their backgrounds do not correspond with the interviewing and documentation skills needed to give fair and consistent evaluations.

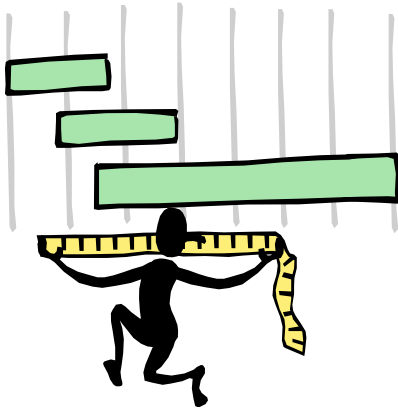
***It's important to communicate, observe and collect information throughout the appraisal period on all employees which reflects the good, the bad and the ugly. Create file folders for each of your employees. Insert copies of monthly status reports or letters of commendation. Make notes on calendars or notebooks. Send short e-mail messages or write a few words on copies of their work such as excellent, needs more details, sloppy, etc. You can then put copies of these in your appraisal folders to serve as ticklers at evaluation time. Remember, feedback is most effective when it's immediate. However, you must keep track of the entire appraisal period so you don't base ratings on only the most recent events.***

Be able to give objective reasons for the ratings on your evaluations. To have meaning, employees must believe that their supervisor has an accurate understanding of what they do on the job and the quality of work that is done. Documentation should be as specific as possible including date, time, place and who was involved.

A negative performance review should never come as a surprise to an employee. Goals and objectives should be given and reviewed at the beginning of the evaluation period and any problems addressed or

praise given as they occur. The actual performance evaluation should be a time to review, reflect and set new goals.

A common pitfall of supervisors is to give an employee a better evaluation than deserved hoping to motivate an employee. However, a sugar-coated evaluation is worse than no appraisal at all! It gives an employee a false sense of security and provides the employee with documented proof that you are satisfied with his performance, which he can use in a wrongful discharge claim.



All areas of deficiency must be noted in a performance evaluation. Even if the problem areas are minor, the appraisal should include a section concerning those areas that the employee should focus on to improve job

**Plan and prepare for performance evaluations.** Make sure employees understand and sign a copy of your evaluation criteria at the beginning of each appraisal period. Then, give employees a few days notice to review the goals and objectives they were to achieve, allowing them to explain why they have been successful or not and allowing them to highlight other achievements. Conduct the actual performance evaluation in private and allow sufficient, uninterrupted time. Listen openly and seriously consider their suggestions and ideas. Follow an outline of topics you want to discuss and have all pertinent documentation ready.

Monitor your emotions and body language. Be prepared to discuss what future opportunities the organization has for the employee. Don't neglect to develop a plan for improvement and a contract for new career objectives or goals along with details of how this will be accomplished.

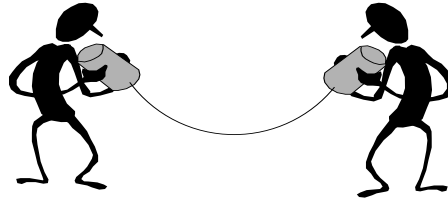
Emphasize behavior, not attitude. Attitude is too abstract a concept for many employees. Behavior (really the result of attitude) is something concrete that can be understood.

Give positive feedback often and soon after satisfactory performances. Don't worry about overpraising an employee as long as the praise is sincere. Don't assume that your independent, motivated workers don't want praise or acknowledgement of a job well done and, remember, praise need not be elaborate. Your appreciation of their work can go a long way toward inspiring loyalty and motivation. However, some employees do need more praise than others. Your extra efforts in acknowledging their endeavors and successes can help them build up enough self confidence to take further risks.

Be sure to conduct the performance evaluation within the time period you tell employees to expect. Failure to do this indicates that you do not value them as a priority; it may also have an adverse legal impact should a person file a wrongful discharge suit later on.

When problems occur, the supervisor should explain what the problem is, why it's a problem and discuss what can be done to correct the problem as well as possible consequences. Ask what the employee sees as the solution. Be sure to set definite time frames for employee's improvement and any agreements you make to provide training or assistance.

**Effective performance evaluations** can empower your people to effectively contribute to the success of your organization, and they can help you stay out of legal trouble.



- \* **Extract important objectives from the major responsibilities of your employees' job descriptions.**
- \* **Use objective standards whenever possible and provide concrete examples when you must use subjective standards.**
- \* **Clearly communicate goals, expectations and your means of evaluating them to employees in writing at the beginning of the appraisal period. It's a good idea to have employees sign these at the beginning of the appraisal period and after the results of your evaluation.**
- \* **Train all personnel involved in giving evaluations.**
- \* **Give immediate and ongoing feedback to all of your employees.**
- \* **Keep documented records throughout the appraisal period on all employees.**
- \* **Concentrate on performance, not personality or personal problems. Constructively criticize work habits and behavior, not the person.**
- \* **Reinforce good habits with immediate recognition and praise. Be specific. A little praise, when deserved, can be a great motivator.**
- \* **Be honest.**
- \* **Get feedback from employees and listen carefully.**
- \* **Plan and prepare for performance evaluations—review, reflect and set new goals.**
- \* **Be prepared to discuss what future opportunities the organization has for the employee.**

# Effective Performance Evaluations

## Supervisor's Checklist

Performance problems occur for a variety of reasons. Following is a list of the more common reasons that should be given consideration:

- √ Is additional training needed?
- √ Is the employee overworked?
- √ Is there a personality conflict with a co-worker?
- √ Has new equipment been installed or a new procedure implemented that the employee is not comfortable with?
- √ Has a personnel change affected the employee or the department in general?
- √ Is the employee having family problems?
- √ Is the employee having a health problem (including drug and alcohol abuse)?
- √ Has the employee misrepresented his or her background?
- √ Has the employee failed to keep current with developments in the field?
- √ Does the employee need help in reorganizing his or her workload?
- √ Is the employee aware of how his or her work is being evaluated?
- √ Are there physical barriers in the way of the employee's success (i.e.: poor lighting, substandard equipment, excess noise, overcrowding, etc.)?

Be sure to set definite time frames for employee's improvement and any agreements you make to provide training or assistance.